

ROUTING

Top Secret 218

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Wednesday 28 June 1978

CG NIDC 78/150C

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Wednesday, 28 June 1978.

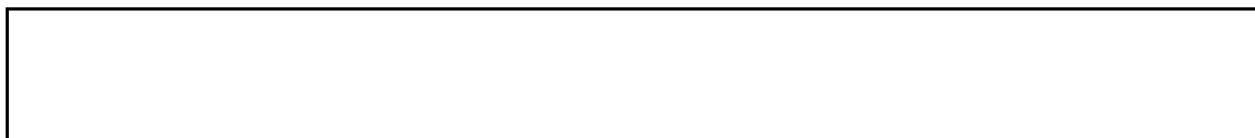
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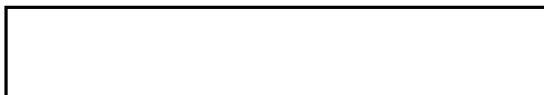
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AFGHANISTAN: Rival Factions

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[] *The proposed appointment of Interior Minister Nur Ahmed Nur as Afghanistan's Ambassador to Washington suggests that President Taraki is getting his rivals out of the way. Nur has long been a close associate of Taraki's main rival, Deputy Prime Minister Babrak Karmal.*

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[] Taraki and Babrak head the two rival Marxist factions, which merged last year after a 10-year split to form the ruling People's Democratic Party. The two men disagreed over tactics--Babrak favored a harder line--but there were no significant ideological differences between their groups. Babrak is reported, however, to have said that Taraki is not really a Marxist.

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[] Babrak, who has not been mentioned in the press for several days, may be named Ambassador to Czechoslovakia. Several prominent members of his faction may also be sent abroad.

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[] We do not know the reasons for the latest rift, but it could stem from differences over relations with the USSR or the pace of domestic policy change. Taraki presumably takes a more nationalist and cautious approach to these issues than Babrak.

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[] Taraki so far appears to have had no trouble getting his way--probably because of his greater support in the military. He still faces many difficult and potentially risky decisions in foreign and domestic policy, and must anticipate some opposition from Babrak's faction even if Babrak and his main supporters accept foreign assignments. []

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ITALY: Regional Elections

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[] *Regional and municipal elections in northern Italy on Sunday and Monday were so heavily influenced by local issues that political leaders will hesitate to read national implications into the vote to the extent they did in the local elections last month.*

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[] The voting in May showed a clear pattern of Christian Democratic and Socialist gains at Communist expense--a trend that has intensified interparty maneuvering leading up to balloting in the presidential election, set to begin tomorrow.

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[] The latest balloting took place in the northern border regions of Friuli-Venezia-Giulia and Valle d'Aosta. The Communists again suffered losses compared to their performance in the same areas during the 1976 parliamentary contest, but this time the vote for the Christian Democrats and Socialists also declined. The losses of the major parties were apparently due mainly to the strong performance of locally-based protest groups such as the "For Trieste" movement.

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[] "For Trieste," based in Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, draws most of its support from voters who think the national government was careless with Trieste's interests in settling a post-World War II boundary dispute with Yugoslavia last year. The movement did particularly well in the Trieste municipal election, where its 27.3 percent amounted to a plurality and relegated the Christian Democrats and Communists to second and third place respectively.

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USSR: Correspondents Summoned

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[] *The USSR's unprecedented decision to summon two American correspondents to appear in a Moscow courtroom today on slander charges may reflect Soviet concern over the correspondents' coverage of recent dissident activity in Soviet Georgia and Armenia.*

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[] The correspondents--Craig Whitney of the *The New York Times* and Harold Piper of the *Baltimore Sun*--traveled to Soviet Georgia last month where they wrote articles on the post-trial televised "confession" of Georgian dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdiya. Both articles said Soviet sources believed Gamsakhurdiya's performance before the cameras was made under duress and was heavily edited.

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[] The two correspondents' aggressive coverage of anti-Russian demonstrations in Georgia in mid-April, at the time of the adoption of the new republic constitutions, also may have influenced the Soviet decision.

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[] The action against Whitney and Piper appears to be part of the ongoing campaign to restrict contacts between foreign journalists and Soviet citizens and to subject Western

media in the USSR to a form of censorship. It may also be intended to provide leverage in the event that the US goes ahead with criminal prosecution of two Soviet spies arrested in New Jersey on 20 May. Although the bail issue in that case has been settled, the two Soviets are to be available for all court appearances in the future.

25X1 [] In this connection, a Foreign Ministry spokesman has told the journalists that the case appears to be of a civil rather than criminal nature because it is being initiated by the State Committee for Television and Radio. If this proves to be the case, it would indicate a measured step by the authorities to make their point while attempting to temper the expected US and Western reaction. []

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BRIEFS

South Yemen

25X1 [] The fighting that began in South Yemen's capital on Monday apparently ended early yesterday, and the city is reported quiet. There are no firm indications of fighting or unrest in other parts of the country, but such information might not reach us immediately.

25X1 [] Aden radio continues to justify the execution of President Salim Rubayya Ali by repeating charges that he had deviated from the principle of collective leadership. In an effort to reduce tension with North Yemen, the South Yemenis are stressing their commitment to close cooperation between the two countries and are warning of plots designed to disrupt relations.

25X1 [] Soviet reaction to the events in South Yemen has thus far been confined to a TASS announcement of Ali's execution.

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